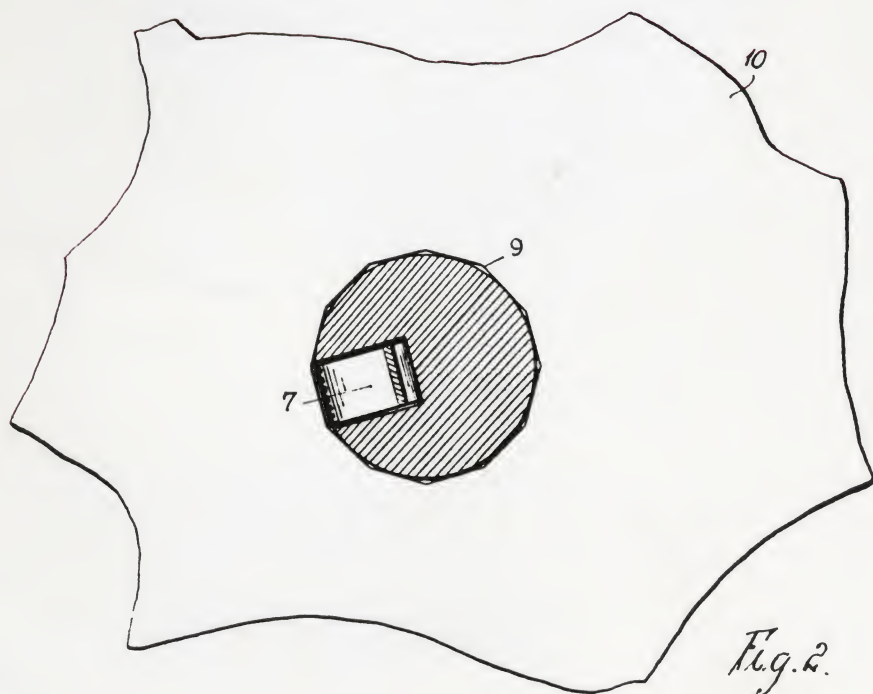


Hillandale

News

No 203 April 1995



MECHANICAL MUSIC

Tuesday 23 May 1995



A G&T. Oak Gramophone pedestal sold recently at auction for £2500.

Phillips hold regular sales of Mechanical Music and related items throughout the year. Entries are currently being accepted for inclusion in our sales throughout 1994.

If you have any items that you would like to be included or would like to find out more about Phillips' services, please contact Anthony Jones.

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Hillandale News

The Official Journal of The City of London Phonograph and Gramophone Society

Founded in 1919

Patrons: Oliver Berliner and Kathleen Darby



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Front cover illustration: Spindle Gripper? - an exciting diagram from BP 421,680.
All is explained in Peter Adamson's article starting on page 271.

EDITOR'S DESK



Phonofair 95

This event takes place on Saturday 29th April 1995 at Abington Vale Middle School in Northampton (see advert on page 267 for full details). Organised by Ruth Lambert, this Phonofair has proved to be a veritable treasure trove for collectors and an excellent venue for meeting friends, old and new, with similar interests. I can recommend this event to all readers and it is well worth a visit.

London Meeting, April 20th 1995

For this meeting we welcome the return of Frank Andrews, who will be continuing his saga *We Have Our Own Records*. As usual Frank will be giving the full details of his researches into the companies who published records. This meeting is well worth attending and all are welcome. No one will leave without learning something new about their hobby.

London Meeting, May 18th 1995

For this meeting Eliot Levin, of Symposium Records, will be bringing along his new cylinder playing machine. He invites anyone who comes along to bring their favourite cylinder to play on this machine. This meeting is a must for those wishing to hear their cylinders in their full glory. Please note the correct date of this meeting. I apologise for putting the incorrect date in last issue's notice of future London meetings.

Articles on Machines

One of my regular appeals since I became Editor of this magazine has been for articles on machines. I still have room to accommodate many more machine based articles. One idea that I thought might appeal to our readers is for some comparative reviews of phonographs or gramophones to be published. How about some of our machine enthusiasts comparing the merits of say the HMV 101 with those of the Decca Junior and/or Columbia 201? I look forward to receiving some interesting reviews; maybe some of these will prompt other collectors to write other reviews with differing views.

Please note that material intended for inclusion in *Hillandale News* must reach the Editor not later than **six weeks before the first day of the month of issue**.

Hence the deadline for the **June** issue will be **15th April 1995**.

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Views expressed in this magazine do not necessarily reflect those of the Editor.

THE BRITISH RECORD INDUSTRY DURING THE REIGN OF KING EDWARD VII: 1901 - 1910

by Frank Andrews

Part 5

1907 - the Cylinder Market is Stabilised

The new year began with one major make of cylinder absent from the market (as far as new issues were concerned), that being Pathé Records.

Columbia carried on through the year, having introduced 6" long cylinders for the 1906-1907 season under the names of *Premier* at 2s. and *Premier Classic* at 3s. Their other makes selling in 1907 were *Symphonic* at 1s. and the *Lyric* priced at 9d.

The National Phonograph Co. continued with its Edison Standard 2 minute records including more issues in the Opera singers series with "B" prefixed numbers. In August, a factory in Chandos Road, near Willesden Junction, London N.W. was secured, and in October the company reduced its Standard Records from 1s. 6d. each to 1s. each.

Edison Bell, for the new 1906-1907 season, were well into the production of their *Xtralong* cylinders, selling at 1s. each and claiming a length of $4\frac{3}{4}$ " in contrast to the standard 4" long records which had been prevalent since 1898.

The Sterling Records, from the Russell Hunting Record Co. Ltd. had also been given greater length for the new season, the first at $4\frac{1}{2}$ " going on sale in September 1906.

The White Cylinder Records from the General Phonograph Co. Ltd. were discontinued just as the 1906-1907 season was getting under way. The last White list was published in October 1907. James White's

company had not gone out of business but had bought the collapsed business of Neophone Ltd. and the General Phonograph Co. then concentrated on disc production alone.

All other makes of cylinder appear to have disappeared by the time the new 1907-1908 season arrived. There were then no Indestructible type of cylinders being advertised, but **Henry Seymour** had perfected his own indestructibles in 1906. Although they were forecast as a new entrant into the market, nothing more was heard of them until after a May 1907 announcement that his records were due to be sold at 1s. 6d. each. Silence fell until September when the Russell Indestructible Record was introduced at 1s. each; the first list was published in October. This was the Seymour invention. F. M. Russell and Co. were manufacturers of railway wagons and motor cars at Cumberland Place, Willesden Junction, London N.W. but they were also manufacturers, for a spell, of the Henry Seymour reproducers, with an address in Bishopsgate, London E.C.

The Russell Company had taken on Seymour as a superintendent, and for a temporary measure used Seymour's premises while they were being equipped for records manufacture. In 1907 there was a break in the relationships between Seymour and the company, with Seymour suing the Russell firm over some matter. The Russell Indestructible Cylinder Records were only issued for three months, although they did capture the piano playing of Herr Professor Viggo Kihl, an artist important enough to be included in a musicians *Who's Who*.

What was probably the last cylinder recording and manufacturing company to be formed in the U.K. (if one includes its successor company) was the **Premier Manufacturing Co. Ltd.** which put its *Clarion Gold Moulded Records* on sale also in October 1907. The Clarion Records were continued as 2 min. wax cylinders. The last mention found of them was in May 1925, when they were said to be still in production, and as the Clarion Record Co. Ltd. (the successors) did not go into voluntary liquidation until 1927, it is possible that new issues were forthcoming at least during 1926. The works were always at The Point, Wandsworth, London S.W.

1907 - More German Discs Arrive - Plus Others

On the disc side of the market, 1907 saw two notable events. In February The Gramophone and Typewriter Ltd. turned the first sod in Hayes, Middlesex as the first moves in the construction of a factory where both gramophones and records would be made; then, in November, the company changed its name to **The Gramophone Company Ltd.**, the second use of that name.

With Columbia, the single-sided Columbia Graphophone Records were supposed to form the first regular series of double-sided recorded discs, *Columbia Double Face Records*, but, as the two different kinds of labels were not ready on time, the old style labels were used for the remaining months in 1907.

(Columbia Double Face Record D 36 with W. H. Berry in *Mrs Tootle* was played at Neasden.)

F. M. Prescott, the founder of the Odeon Records, was already back in the U.S.A. Prescott had worked in Berlin for a season for the new owners Fonotipia Ltd. At the end of January and Alfred Michaelis, founder of Fonotipia Records, resigned as Fonotipia Ltd.'s General Manager in Milan.

The label of Fonotipia discs was registered as a trade mark in Britain, but with the Italian Branch company as its proprietors. This was to cause some confusion in a court case after the Great War of 1914-1918. Sterling and Hunter Ltd. continued to be sales agents for Odeon Records and the recording of artists at the Hamsell Street studios in the City of London, where some Fonotipia recordings were also made. The U.K. records were given their own Sterling and Hunter numbers, as well as bearing the International Talking Machine Company of Berlin's international numbers for each face. The Crystalate Factory was still under exclusive contract to press both Odeon and Fonotipia discs, a factory which Sterling and Hunter claimed as "theirs"!

Although there were no more new issues of 7" Gramophone Records during 1907, the 7" Zonophone continued with more releases, along with the 10" size during the year.

The Disc Record Co. Ltd. of Stockport no longer mentioned the availability of the Nicole Records from its factory matrix stock, but those masters continued to be used for variously styled "stencil" records with a newly advertised *The Sovereign Record* produced for **The British Sonogram Co. Ltd.** The first list was issued in June. Unbreakable, the disc was described as the invention of G. H. Burt, who founded the Crystalate Company and had been behind the production of the Nicole Record.

Unlike the Nicoles, which were brown in colour, the Sovereign discs were black, and of 10" size, double-sided recorded. The label disappeared before the year was out, with the last few issues being fresh recordings and not from any former Nicole masters. The company was certified to do business on false returns made by David John Lee who was the assistant manager and company secretary. It was Rees, who had recently sold the language record side



Sovereign Record



Melograph record

of his Modern Language Press system to Sterling and Hunter Ltd., which, in their hands, became the International Linguaphone Co. Rees was indicted and sent to prison for eight days, his claim that he had been duped by solicitors being accepted. A former schoolmaster, he had founded a language college in Brixton, London. The case made history as being the first to have been brought in ten years since the passing of the 1900 Companies Act. It was brought two years after the collapse of British Sonogram. Rees was in business as Fleet and Rees, as phonographic record and accessories manufacturers at the that time.

It was suggested that Rees had misled his company's creditors by claiming that The Disc Record Co. Ltd. of Stockport was owned by British Sonogram. There appears to have been 132 Sovereign Records issued during their short existence, and I would like details of those numbered between 101 and 107 and 109 to 126, which were all probably re-pressings of Nicole Record masters.

(No example was played at Neasden.)

The second example of a "stencilled" disc that became available during 1907 was the 10" *Era* records. They were pressed from Beka Grand Records, in Berlin, and sold as single or both faces recorded discs. **The New Polyphon Supply Company** was one of the stockists, which introduced them in November during the 1907-1908 season. They retailed at 2s. and 3s. respectively. The longevity of this label as a registered trade mark, as it appears on the discs, remains a mystery. Applied for in July 1907 and registered in October, it belonged to a watchmaker named William Robert Petty, of New Southgate, Middlesex. I can find no connection between him and the Beka Record G.m.b.H. nor with the New Polyphon Supply Co. Ltd. No *Era* discs have ever been logged by me carrying the 40,000 matrix series. The British series was

introduced by Beka when it abandoned its "international" matrix numbering method in May 1907, so the *Eras* seen are all from old stock matrices at the time of their introduction. However they were no cheaper than the contemporary Beka Grand Records. Petty, as the owner of the trade mark, was given a change of proprietor's address in August 1920, which was at 59/61 Farringdon Road, the home of the House of **John G. Murdoch and Co. Ltd.** one of the British talking machine trade's leading figures. Then in April 1921, Petty renewed the *Era* trade mark, to run for another 14 years. It was only removed from the trade marks register in 1935 when there was a failure to renew. The renewed trade mark can only imply that the trade mark was being used on something somewhere between 1908 and at least 1922, unless *Era* discs continued to be sold abroad.

Both *Era* and the record label were registered in Germany as trade marks of Beka Record G.m.b.H. for machines and records, but registration was granted respectively in February 1909.

(No example was played at Neasden.)

The next German made disc to come to Britain was the *Melograph Record* which had the peculiarity in having both a "stencilled disc" and genuine first-time used matrices. All examples concerning this label state the records were made in Liverpool, England. Such is not the case.

The German firm of Ernest Hesse and Co. of Germany, established since 1902, after years of making talking machines, transferred its operations to the **Schallplattenwerke of Star Record G.m.b.H.** in the summer of 1905 and introduced the *Star Record* in July. It is possible that *Star Records* were imported into England from that date. However, in July 1907, the **Melograph Disc Record Co. Ltd.** was formed in the Lyceum Chambers, 97, Hanover Street, Liverpool. Under an agreement

with Hesse and Co. *Melograph Records* began selling directly to dealers, in September, 10" double-side recorded at 2s. 6d. each. By October the first listed 15 discs were completely sold out. All had been "stencilled" from Star Record matrices, although recording had already taken place in Liverpool. *Star Records* were announced in Germany, in November, as having an English repertoire. The first of those were not available until January 1908 as *Melograph Records*, by which time the business was established in Hale Buildings, St. Thomas's Street, Liverpool. The managing director was a Mr Thomas Ellis. He had already been in the trade for ten years with **The Gramophone Supply Stores**, and it was he who incorporated the company at his own expense and entered into the agreement with Hesse and Co.

The solid stock shellac discs were advertised as having a playing time of 4½ minutes, and the Liverpool recording studio was willing to audition any artist recommended by any local dealer in the *Melograph Record*.

(The side played at Neasden was from a 12" disc, not introduced until 1911, which had a colourful label depicting three mermaids in a river or pool, one of whom is plainly seen to be holding a *Star Record*. Meyerbeer's *Torch Dance* performed by the (Star) *Melograph Orchestra* on No.9 was the title played.) *Melograph 12"* sold at 4s.

The *Lyrophon Record*, was imported from Germany in May 1907 through the Globos Record agent, Frank Rauth of Christopher Street, London E.C. He had been appointed sole sales agent not only for the U.K. but also for the British Colonies and America. In April readers of *The Phono Trader* were asked to watch out for the first British list. Whether or not that meant British Artists' recordings would be available or simply a list selected from Lyrophon's international recordings, remains undecided as no British

artist's recordings have been logged by me. According to a June 1907 announcement, recording rooms were to be established in London. A Lyrophon catalogue was announced in October, advertising Lyrophon machines and records selected from the company's six thousand titles already forming part of its international repertoire. By October T. Trevor Jones, a dealer in Birmingham, should have been stocking both 10" and 12" Lyrophons. The 10" were advertised to sell at 3s.

Certainly on sale in London, by A. Lyon and Co. in the City Road, E.C., in December 1907, were 12,864 remaindered, single-sided recorded 10" Lyrophons selling at the reduced rate of 1s. 6d. each, whose regular price had formerly been 2s. 6d. They consisted of recordings made by the foremost bands of Germany, France and Austria plus some instrumental recordings. As late as January 1914, Lyrophon records were still mentioned as having "included latest English titles". Lyrophon discs, with the lyre depicted on the label, went into the German market in March 1904, from **Lyrophon G.m.b.H.** W. Bahre of Berlin was selling agent for Germany and England in November 1907, so Lyrophons may have been circulated here from December 1904. By March 1905 Lyrophon were in liquidation and Adolf Lieban, who had been in the talking machine business since before January 1902, took over the business forming a new firm under the name of **Lyrophon-werke Adolf Lieban and Co. G.m.b.H.**, Lieban's extant company already having *Lieban Schallplatten* and *Apollo Records* on the market.

(No example was played.)

A word or two more about the Neophone business. In February 1907 the **International Neophone Co. Ltd.** had been formed to rationalize the businesses of the foreign Neophone companies. Henry Klein, late of Nicole Frères, had brought his finer

cut recording method into the studio where only the solid stock Neolite discs were pressed under the Neophone label. As already stated, in July 1907, James White's General Phonograph Co. Ltd. purchased Neophone's business, and White brought his disc gold moulding method into use. From then on, the records were called *Neophone Disc Phonographs - System White*, in lieu of *System Michaelis*. White had already introduced his White Gramophones to the market, and had promised a 12" *White Gold Moulded Record*, some of which were probably pressed as an example was depicted on a White Gramophone advertised in America's *Talking Machine World*. The joining of his process with the Neophone recordings precluded the release of the White records on the market here.

The American *Imperial Records* continued to sell, and there were a few "stencilled" discs among them, for at the close of 1906 Leeds and Catlin had become involved in arrangements with the Favorite company in Germany, and a few of that company's matrices became available to the American company. The results were amongst those selected from Imperial's own repertoire as suitable for the U.K.

A new entrant from America was the 10" and 12" *Star Record* with an H & S monogram on its blue, red and white label. H & S were the initials of **Hawthorne and Sheble** whose manufacturing company was in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Sheble had been in the phonograph business since 1892. With Hawthorne and F. M. Prescott, he had been a director of the former International Phonograph and Indestructible Record Co. Ltd. in Liverpool, and both had been associated with Prescott's brother as The American Record Company, makers of the *Blue Odeon Records*. That company had suffered a defeat in the American courts on January 14th 1907, with an injunction to cease making gramophone records. Hawthorne and Sheble's new ven-

ture was soon under way, with Star machines and records already available the following March. Over 300 titles were available, at 60 cents per disc. Machines and records went on exhibition in Christopher Street E.C. in August 1907 and in September it was announced that the General Phonograph Co. Ltd. were to handle the Star machines and records from their premises at 1, Worship Street, the home of the Neophone business.

The Star Record was another "stencilled" disc and, thanks to the researches of Martin Bryan in America, it can safely be affirmed that the majority were either from later 10" American Record Company's (*Indian Records*) masters and from the Columbia Phonograph Company General's 10" and 12" matrices. At least one Star record has been reported with its labels stuck over Columbia's own label yet Hawthorne and Sheble actually had the impudence to claim that the American Graphophone Co.'s works at Bridgeport, Connecticut (where Columbias were pressed) was one of their own three factories!

A short list of *Star Records*, in both sizes, was printed for August 1907. There was an alternative label, printed in red, gold and black and which bore a six pointed star in contrast to a five pointed star on the blue, red and white label.

(No example was played at Neasden.)

Another disc record imported from the U.S.A. in October 1907 was the Columbia *Marconi Velvet Tone Record*. Marconi is reputed to be the inventor of the disc which had a proprietary plastic surface over an inner core of paper material - a laminated record. As with the so-called *Columbia Indestructible Cylinder Records*, the Velvet Tones, although manufactured by the American Graphophone Company in America were not handled here by the British branch of the Columbia Phonograph Co. Gen'l., but were imported and placed in



Star Record



Rex Record

the hands of appointed factors. One such factor was **The American Talking Machine Co.**, whose proprietor was John Nottingham, who had been in the talking machine industry since the early 1890s, and who was called the 'Father of the Trade' in the years before that accolade was used to describe James E. Hough. The discs were black in colour and came in both the 10" and 12" sizes. It is claimed that they were all made from the American Graphophone's matrices at Bridgeport, Connecticut, as used for the standard Columbia records in the U.S.A., and that the *Marconi Velvet Tone* bore the same catalogue numbers. The example I displayed at Neasden shows that this cannot be true as the label had the number 050, and if it was a post-April 1908 issue, it should show an 'A' prefixed number. The single-sided U.S.A. Columbia Record did not have 'O' prefixed numbers. The British registered trade mark of the label was owned by The Columbia Phonograph Co. Gen'l. at both its New York and London addresses.

There was one other new label in 1907, possibly called the *Rex Record* or *New Rex Record*. This record could have been either a disc or cylinder. It was constantly advertised in *The Talking Machine World* in America from January 1907 to September 1907 by the Rex Record Company of London. I believe it is unlikely that the advertisement was referring to the ex-stock of the *Rex Gold Moulded Cylinder Records*, which had been purchased by a dealer as bankrupt stock, because the advertisement asked for anybody, who might be interested, to get in touch for future trade.

Another Rex disc record is known with a pink and black label on both sides, but with no catalogue number and no artists' credits. One side has a title from 1908, and the reverse side had one from late 1909. The label's design is consistent with the layout of the former *Nicole Records* and the sides show the embossed 'Made in England' in

the wax, which is regarded as the product of the **Disc Record Co. Ltd.** of Stockport, later of Harrow. This label had the depiction of an iris-like flower at its top. The titles were too late to be Nicole recordings, and as the Disc Record Company had quite a few different matrix stocks from German, American and English sources, which it used up to the 1913/14 season, it cannot be claimed with any certainty that the pink labelled *Rex Record* was issue before May 1910. I have not discovered any connection between the Rex disc just described and the advertisements of 1907.

In July, Pathé Frères extended their disc line by introducing their 28cm (11") double-sided discs at 4s. each. They also offered their new 20cm (8½") duplex discs at 1s. 6d. each. All Pathé disc records were first recorded on large and long master cylinders from which the wax disc masters were cut by a special apparatus.

Double-side Recorded Discs

Before moving onto 1908, I think that, in the light of the warning put out by the International talking Machine Co.m.b.H. (Odeon Records) in 1904, an explanation is required about the prevalence of new double-sided discs during 1906 and 1907. The immediate effect of that warning caused Columbia not to release any further new discs in that format, which it had only recently introduced with black and silver labels.

As an edition of Allen Koenigsberg's *Antique Phonograph Monthly* has shown, in an article by Tim Brooks, double-sided *E. Berliner Gramophone* type 7" discs were made at about the time Eldridge Johnson went into disc production on his own account at the turn of the century in the U.S.A. The American, Adenor N. Petit, first applied for a patent for double-sided recorded discs at the end of the first week of the new century, January 7th 1900. After many rejections and re-wordings of his

application it was allowed in December 1903. In the meantime, Adenor Petit had come to Liverpool, where with Prescott, Hawthorne and Sheble (all Americans) and some British investors the **International Phonograph and Indestructible Record Co. Ltd.** was formed with Petit as Works Manager. At that time Prescott was already running the **International Zonophone Company** in Berlin and from 1902 he supplied his South American agent **Casa Edison** with double-sided *Zonophone Records*. As Petit had yet to be granted his patent, that explains why the Zonophone discs did not carry any patent legend on the labels, nor in the surrounds. By the time that Petit had his patent granted on December 17th 1903 (when patents were also taken for other countries), Prescott was already in production with his new *Odeon Records*. Having taken an interest in Petit's patent, he was able to print the patent numbers for various countries on the first labels pressed with the *Odeon Records* first released in 1904, when the American patent was only just six weeks old.

After the 1904 'Warning' was published, only Odeon and Fonotopia produced duplex records until the close of 1905 when others began issuing double-sided discs, but generally with their single-sided discs still available.

What was behind the development? Although it was possible that the licences had been granted to the manufacturers to proceed with double-sided discs, I consider it more likely, that knowing that **Schallplattenfabrik Favorite Record G.m.b.H.** was challenging the Austrian patent in the Imperial Royal Courts of Justice with the probability of success, the chance was taken to enter the double disc market. The Austrian patent was annulled in January 1906. The patent, in its final form, was not for double-sided discs, 'per se'. The main claim hinged on the pressing of the two sides simultaneously. Unfortunately for the defence of the patent, it was averred that it was only possible to impress double-sided discs in that manner, as pressing one side first and then the other could only result in a distortion of the first pressing, which implied that the earlier Berliner type discs and Zonophones of 1902 had already been pressed in the patented manner and therefore was no novelty in the patent. Once the Austrian patent had failed, then it would be difficult to maintain the patent in other countries.

To be continued

THE NEW REX RECORD CO., LONDON

Offer a British made Record at a price which will command trade. It secures preferential tariff in all British Colonies. Get into touch with this line for future trade.

PARTICULARS FROM
THE NEW REX CO., 261 Liverpool Road, LONDON, ENGLAND
GEO. DYER, Sec.

JAN 10/1907

FROM THE ABOVE ADVERTISEMENT IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO SAY WHETHER A CYLINDER OR DISC RECORD IS REFERRED TO. THE RECORDS WERE HARDLY LIKELY TO HAVE BEEN THE DEALER'S STOCK OF THE 'REX' CYLINDERS OF 1906.



Forthcoming Meetings in London

London Meetings are held at the National Sound Archive, 29 Exhibition Road, South Kensington, on the third Thursday evening of the month promptly at **6.45pm** (unless stated otherwise). Members' attention is drawn to the London Meetings Notice on page 100 of issue 188 (October 1992).

- | | |
|-----------------------|--|
| April 20th | <i>We Have Our Own Records</i> , Part 3 - Frank Andrews presents a further glimpse into the world of unusual labels |
| May 18th | Eliot Levin of Symposium Records will demonstrate his new cylinder playing machine. Members are invited to bring along their favourite cylinders and let Eliot reveal their true secrets on his machine! |
| June 15th | <i>The Blues and the Gray</i> presented by George Frow and Dominic Combe. A cylinder programme using a machine from Dominic's collection. |
| July 20th | Tom Little - Title to be announced |
| August 17th | Programme to be announced |
| September 15th | Nigel Douglas the well-known singer and broadcaster will be talking about and giving illustrations from his books and CDs entitled <i>Legendary Singers</i> |

A COLLECTOR'S MANIA

by Brian Ahearne

The two consuming passions of my life have been that great Irish tenor Count John McCormack, and collecting gramophones. I have discovered that a certain symbiosis exists between the two. I would set off to buy records of John McCormack, and be offered a gramophone on which to play them, and of course, vice versa; so the two became inextricably linked.

At one stage I had amassed a collection of seventy phonographs and horn gramophones, plus an assortment of the more mediocre portables, table grands etc. Also beginning to get out of hand was a collection of ten thousand 78s, the latter forming the basis of a radio programme, which went out 'live' on BBC Wales every Friday morning for 26 weeks. The programme involved travelling all over Wales, and at each location, finding from my collection, somebody from that area who had made records (not an easy task, I can assure you). Credulity was sometimes stretched to an alarming degree, and resulted in a heavy postbag.

During the course of one particular broadcast, I mentioned my E.M.G. This brought a kind letter from Mrs Esther Ginn, the widow of the inventor. This dear lady sent me photos of her late husband, and also loaned me a medal presented to Mr Ginn by *The Gramophone* for his E.M.G. Model B which was exhibited at Caxton Hall, London in 1925. This medal or award took the form of a small gold plated record, with the obverse side engraved 'E.M.G. Model B. July 9th 1925'.

I returned the medal to Mrs Ginn, explaining how proud I had been to have been its custodian for the brief period, and how much it had been admired. A few days later it was returned to me with a short note from Mrs Ginn to say that I could keep it. I never cease to be amazed at the kindness of people, and I have to say that most of my treasured possessions have been similarly donated. I will never part with it.

My E.M.G. sound-box required some attention and Mrs Ginn suggested that I might like to send the sound-box to Mr David Phillips in Devon. He was a partner to Mr Ginn and was responsible for the design of the sound-boxes. I duly sent it off and it was returned with a new diaphragm, gaskets etc., and was tuned to perfection; all, I may add, at no charge. A bit like having Sir Henry Royce tune your car free of charge.

It is true to say that I have been besotted with the great John McCormack since childhood, having been brought up in a very Irish and musical environment. John McCormack made a film in 1929 called *Song O' My Heart*. After it had done the rounds and been exhibited worldwide, the copies were returned to the vaults of Fox Studios, where a disastrous fire subsequently destroyed many masterpieces including *Song O' My Heart*.

I have suffered the cruellest heartache, travelled many miles on wild goose chases, in an attempt to locate a surviving copy. By far the worst of these was a journey to Scotland, only to find that the film on offer was not *Song O' My Heart*, but one entitled

Song of My Heart, a film about some composer or other. The homeward journey was the longest imaginable, and I walked about in a state of deep depression for weeks.

There was, however, a copy in the Smithsonian Institute, New York, but it was too brittle to go through the projector, and fell to bits. I was then I decided to place an advert. in *Hillandale News*. I offered my entire collection of seventy machines, in exchange for the film. My 'cri de coeur' was exemplified as a double-page spread in the magazine. A couple of days after the appearance of the advert, or perhaps I should say a couple of nights, I was awakened at 2am by the telephone. My state of sleepy apprehension was quickly transformed into frenetic excitement when my New York caller told me he had a copy of the elusive film and was willing to do business.

My acquiescence to a swap of my lifetime's collection for this rare film was spontaneous, and sleep eluded me for the rest of the night, and for several other nights. Written confirmation was airmailed, and just over a week later, my American rang to say he was at Heathrow, and was on his way in a Hertz van to take away my machines.

In anticipation of receiving the film I had hired a projector and, much to the consternation of Alice, my wife, I had cut a small aperture in the wall dividing my music room and the front 'parlour'. This was to enable the film to be seen without too much noise from the projector.

It is hard to describe the feeling I had when I had to load up my beloved 'Dog Model', Klingsor, coin-operated Columbia, Edison Red Gem, Auxetophone, etc., etc. I watched the van disappear down the road and hoped that the American would give them the same tender loving care I had lavished on them over the years.

My friend and colleague, Emrys Mathews, laced the film into the projector, which stood on a small table surmounted by a pile of books, to bring the projector to the required height. I sat in the front room my eyes fixed firmly on the screen.

St. Bernadette's vision of the Blessed Virgin Mary could not compare with the utter elation I felt when John McCormack appeared on that screen. I have to confess that I wept tears of joy and gratitude at the sight.

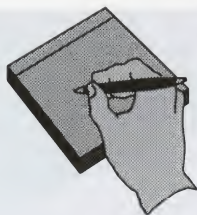
I have since shown the film in convents, seminaries, churches etc. all over the country and in Ireland. It was at the request of the *John McCormack Society of Ireland* that I took the film to Moore Abbey in County Kildare. This is a massive mansion and was the McCormack's home from 1925 to 1937. A part of the film was actually shot in the grounds, and it was a great thrill to see the scenery still as it appeared in the film.

So I shall be for ever grateful to *Hillandale News*, and to Ernie Bayly for the striking way my advertisement was presented. I have now started to collect again, and so far, have acquired a Grafonola 50, a Graphophone AT and a few portables. I would like some blue Amberols and 2 minute waxes. If anyone can oblige I will be most grateful. I can be contacted by telephone on [REDACTED], or by post at [REDACTED] Swansea SA5 9PG.



The E.M.G. Hand Made Gramophone Stand with the E.M.G. Model B [? at Caxton Hall, London, 1925]
 The bald gentleman on the right is Mr Ginn, next to him is the Mr David Phillips, mentioned in the article.
 The other two people are David Phillips' younger brother on the left and Mr Burden, who developed the first successful aluminium diaphragm.

LETTERS



Dennis Noble

Dear Mr Hamilton,

Does any member collect 78s by the great baritone Dennis Noble and might wish to share these treasures? I have been trying to obtain his recordings on tape cassette for some time and have a sizeable number, but many still elude my efforts. I have prepared a listing of all the Noble records I have learned about, showing the ones I am still seeking. Perhaps some of your members like to write to me about any Noble recordings he or she may have. Hopefully we can exchange some rarities on tape and both benefit by such action.

I would appreciate any help along these lines.

With thanks,

Charles A. Hooley,

[redacted] Winnipeg, Manitoba
R3G 2R4, CANADA

Orchorsol

Dear Chris,

During one of my forays to the "Barras" of Glasgow, a large plain oak cabinet aroused my suspicions. On opening the full-length front doors, a cloth-covered sound grill met my eyes and suggested that this was an early radio-gramophone. Beneath the lid I discovered what I took to be a curiously curved 'Bakelite pickup' and an unfamiliar trademark incorporating the name 'Orchorsol'.

On closer examination the 'pickup' turned out to be a 'rosewood' tone arm, having a sound-box with a mica diaphragm. Four large screws on the back of the sound-box were fitted for, presumably, adjusting the tension on the diaphragm and consequently the tone.

The tradename was stamped on the face of the sound-box and also appeared in gold across the tone arm. This gold lettering revealed a New Bond Street address on the motor board

and a familiar double-spring Garrard No.10 motor was fitted beneath this. The motor and address suggested that this instrument may have been supplied by the Chappell Piano Co. which was the Sole Sales Concessionaires of the *Cliftophone* gramophone.

I have in my collection a table model fitted with the Garrard No.10 motor and bearing the address 50 New Bond Street, London W1. This machine, as many readers will know, is fitted with an unconventional one-piece tone arm with the name *Cliftophone* on the top and also a horizontally-positioned sound-box with a tortoiseshell-type material diaphragm.

Can any readers confirm any of these details or supply further information about the curious *Orchorsol* machine?

Yours sincerely,

Mark Gray, Hyndland, Glasgow

{See photograph on page 281. Ed.}

Help Please! (1)

Dear Mr Hamilton,

Bill Dean-Myatt suggested I write you. To begin at the beginning, I am a Committee member of the UK branch of the International Military Music Society. I am also a member of the Royal Marines Historical Society. Some little time ago I began a project aimed at producing a definitive document on the recordings made by the Royal Marines Band Service. Both the RHMS and *Blue Band* (the Royal Marines Band Service journal) have indicated an interest in publishing the completed work. Obviously the main body will be devoted to the commercial recordings but during my research I have accumulated quite a large amount of data on non-commercial recordings. This is far too interesting not to be included either as an annexe or a separate chapter.

One of the particular items that I have come across is a reference to cylinder recordings made by the Royal Marines Chatham band. To quote from the *Globe and Laurel* (the journal of the Corps of Royal Marines) dated 1st September 1893:

"About ten of the most accomplished performers of the band of the Royal Marines Chatham Division are carrying out a novel engagement. They are attending the stablishment of Mr Edison in London at stated times and give forth

a number of martial airs, the tunes of which are received in phonographs. These instruments, thus charged, are sent to various parts of the world. The other day two of them were transmitted to the Pope, whilst others have been transmitted to the reigning Princes of India, and to the different crowned heads of Europe, who thus have the opportunity of listening to lively marches, etc., originally played by instrumentalists hundreds of miles away."

Do any of your readers know of these recordings? If they do would they be prepared to furnish me with any additional information that they might have? Do they know if any other military bands were recorded at this time or earlier? Bill has consulted *Edison Phonograph - The British Connection* by Frank Andrews, but it has no mention of the Royal Marines. He was most interested by the quote and believes that it could be the earliest confirmed recording by any sort of band made outside of America. He suggested that I write you and ask if you would publish my request for help in *Hillandale News*.

I do hope that some of your readers are able to help.

Yours sincerely,
John Ambler, [redacted] Bridge
Road, Emsworth, Hants. PO10 7DR

Help Please! (2)

Dear Editor,
I have recently purchased an HMV radio/record player Model No.1508, serial no. 12405. The cartridge needs slight attention and two new styli are required. It was most likely made in the 1950s. Do you know of any source that might carry out this work for me?

Yours sincerely,

Anthony Mitchell,
[redacted] Shirehampton, Bristol BS11
9QJ

(I would contact the Expert Stylus Company who advertise on the back cover. The owner, Mr W. Hodgson may be able to help you. Ed.)

Jack de Manio

Dear Sir,

In the Jack de Manio autobiography *Life Begins Too Early*, published in 1970, he describes an incident at the BBC which happened when he

was training. The tale is slightly saucy and involved the broadcasting of a "woman doing Music for Children, Part Two, talking about hiding and finding your balls". Apparently Wallace Greenslade, the well-known duty announcer in 'Continuity' at the time nearly had a heart attack with hysterics.

Recently helping the widow of an old friend clear up, I came upon some acetates. One of these, about 5" in diameter, is a well-worn 78rpm recording of a "woman doing Music for Children, talking about hiding and finding your balls".

I am curious to know if there was a commercial record made of which this acetate is a copy or whether somebody recorded the actual broadcast. Does anybody know or can they suggest who may be able to shed some light on the matter?

Yours sincerely,
M. P. Shaw, Banbury, Oxfordshire
{*Historic Record* Nos 9 (p.31), 10 (p.5) and 11 (pages 9-10) give details of this broadcast. All replies will be forwarded to Mr Shaw. Ed.}

Charles Neale

Dear Chris,

It is with regret that I have to inform you of the death of Charles Neale on 6th December 1994 at the age of 84. Charles was a member of C.L.P.G.S. for many years and will be sadly missed by those who knew him. He had connections with Decca Records during the early days of the LP.

I was introduced to Charles just a few years ago and I will always be grateful for the advice, information and practical help he gave me with our hobby. His knowledge of machines and love of opera leaves me with fond memories.

Yours sincerely,
Stan North, Sevenoaks, Kent.

Laser Turntable

Dear Editor,
In December 1994 in *Tomorrow's World* on BBC1 a new laser turntable was previewed. It had 5 lasers and it was said that this machine could play any grooved record without picking

up surface noise or scratches. This sounds too good to be true. Does this mean the end of digitally remastering old discs? The 1940s shellac Brunswick record of *White Christmas* with Bing Crosby was played, and it was said to sound very clear. At £20,000 I would think a good Christmas present. Has anyone any information on this turntable?

Yours sincerely,
Daniel Rees, Didcot, Oxfordshire
{Was this the Finial turntable? Ed.}

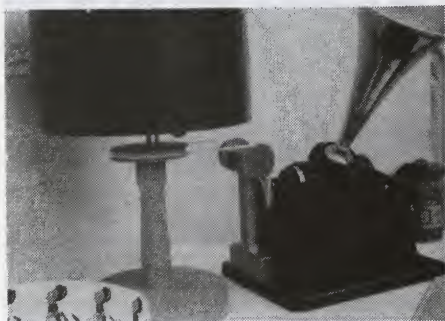
Zoetropes and Phonographs

Dear Sir,
In 1900, movie projectors were in use coupled to phonographs held in some sort of synchronisation by the operator. T. A. Edison claimed to have invented the film projector his *Stereographing Kinetoscope*, in 1891, and, after a long-running dispute, was awarded the patent rights in 1908. Obviously interested in moving pictures, he would surely have possessed a *Zoetrope*, found in Victorian parlours along with the *Stereoscope*, and introduced into America in 1867.

If he had combined it with his phonograph he could have watched and heard the very first musical movie well before 1890.

In my photograph the *Zoetrope* drum contains the well-known running horse with rider strip, and the cylinder is Edison Bell 10180 *The Galloping Major* with Ben Lawes!

Yours faithfully,
D. J. Riches, Feltham, Middlesex



E.M.G.

Dear Chris,
As my research on collecting the history of E.M.G. draws to a close, may I ask two favours of readers who are interested in E.M.G. or E. M. Ginn *Expert* gramophones:

- 1) If you have any personal anecdotes of either firm, or any information not available from the usual printed sources, and you wish it to be included - please communicate it now!
- 2) If anyone has a Mark VII (Cabinet Model) that they would allow to be photographed please let me know. (I'm increasingly desperate!)

Many thanks to all those members who have already helped in so many ways.

Yours sincerely,
Frank James, [REDACTED]
Longhope, Gloucestershire GL17 0RF

The Sinking of the Titanic

Dear Chris,
In answer to Frank Andrews' inquiry (*Hillandale News*, 202, Letters, p.231), the song in question is *The Sinking of the Titanic*, recorded by Vernon Dalhart, with guitar and harmonica accompaniment, in June 1925 and issued as (U.S.) Columbia 15032-D, matrix W140646. While alternate takes may have been issued with slightly different reading of the lyrics, as was so often Dalhart's unwitting custom, my copy (W140646-2) begins:

"It was on one Monday morning
just about one o'clock
when the great Titanic
began to reel and rock" (sic)

The chorus is built around the phrase "It was sad when that great ship went down." Neither the original label (black popular series) or contemporary Columbia catalogues credit the composer; nor could I find the song in any published list or index.

Best wishes,
W. Shaman, Bemidji, Minnesota, U.S.A.
{To my knowledge this recording was not issued in the U.K. on either Columbia or Regal. Ed.}

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An EMG Mk. 10 'Oversize' Gramophone, English,
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THE HOLE STORY: or, why Hayes went twelve-sided by Peter Adamson

Several years ago, I came across a Columbia monthly record supplement for November 1936, which announced, quite unabashed, an alternative to the obvious, traditional, circular shape for the hole in the middle of a record disc: a twelve-sided polygon.

Apart from looking at some late 1930s Columbia discs to check that they had really perpetrated such a strange transformation, I thought no more about it - there seemed to be no other reference to this aberration apart from a contemporaneous advertisement in *The Gramophone* which reproduced the announcement.¹ But a couple of years later, I was tidying away some miscellaneous unwanted records which included cracked specimens - and one of these (an HMV disc of war-time origin) was duly broken in half; before I disposed of the pieces, I spotted an oddity about the light reflected from the edge of the central hole - yes, another polygon. And when I looked through my record collection, I found discs from a range of years with poly-holes. So there it was, the awful possibility that EMI had been producing large quantities of records with non-circular holes, and no one had ever noticed the fact. My brief description of this in a letter to *Hillandale News* (132, June 1983, p.223) elicited no reaction from the readers, and so I left the matter for the time being.

Recently, I was encouraged to have another look at the idea, and I got out the Columbia leaflet and re-read it:

"The new safeguard against variations of pitch and tone. Slipping of records overcome. Polygonal centre hole (12 sides instead of circular) which grips spindle and overcomes slipping of records."

What could this possibly mean? How could such an arrangement be devised so as to grip the spindle tightly enough to eliminate slippage - and yet allow the record to be taken off the turntable? Worse still, inside the leaflet is the additional warning:

"If your record slips even a fraction of an inch on your turntable, there is a variation of pitch and the Tone is ruined. With the new patent Polygonal Centre-Hole now adopted in Columbia records (see front page), slipping has been overcome and precision and perfection of Tone is ensured. This tendency to slip is very liable on automatic radiograms."

Did they really expect record-lovers to believe that their nice new expensive (and breakable) discs would hold tight to the spindle, but allow the owners to prise them off again? And what about "automatic radiograms" - how could the records drop smartly to the turntable whilst clinging for dear life to the spindle? Was it all a big con? Or was there some other reason for the odd shape, which EMI had lumbered themselves with? Clearly something else was involved, and so I decided to investigate, starting with the words "new patent Polygonal Centre-Hole."

THIS MONTH'S NEW RECORDS

THE NEW SAFEGUARD
AGAINST VARIATIONS
OF PITCH AND TONE
**SLIPPING
OF RECORDS
OVERCOME**

POLYGONAL
CENTRE
HOLE

(12 SIDES INSTEAD OF
CIRCULAR) WHICH
GRIPS SPINDLE AND
OVERCOMES SLIPPING
OF RECORDS

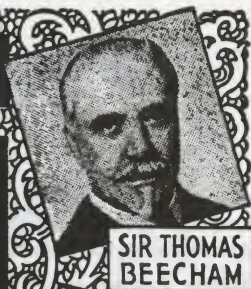


ENSURING
PERFECTION
OF COLUMBIA
TONE



Nov. 1936

Columbia
RECORDS



SIR THOMAS
BEECHAM



SZIGETI



WEINGARTNER



MILSTEIN



EGON PETRI

Spring blades

The first thing I found was the abridged specification for British Patent 421,680, filed on 26 October 1933 by S Whyte of Redhill, Surrey and A J Speed of Eastbourne.² This provides for the "central aperture" in a gramophone record to be of "regular polygonal form, having not less than eight and not more than fourteen sides." (So far, so good: we'll settle for twelve, thank you.) "The object of the invention is to prevent slipping of the record when in use, the polygonal aperture being designed to co-operate more effectively with a spring blade provided in known manner in the turntable spindle..." (Aha!) "According to the Provisional Specification, the hole in the record may be mainly circular, with one or more flats or recesses at the periphery; or it may be formed as a curved-sided figure, or like a ratchet wheel." As you can see, the hole situation could indeed have been "worse, much worse," as George Robey said.

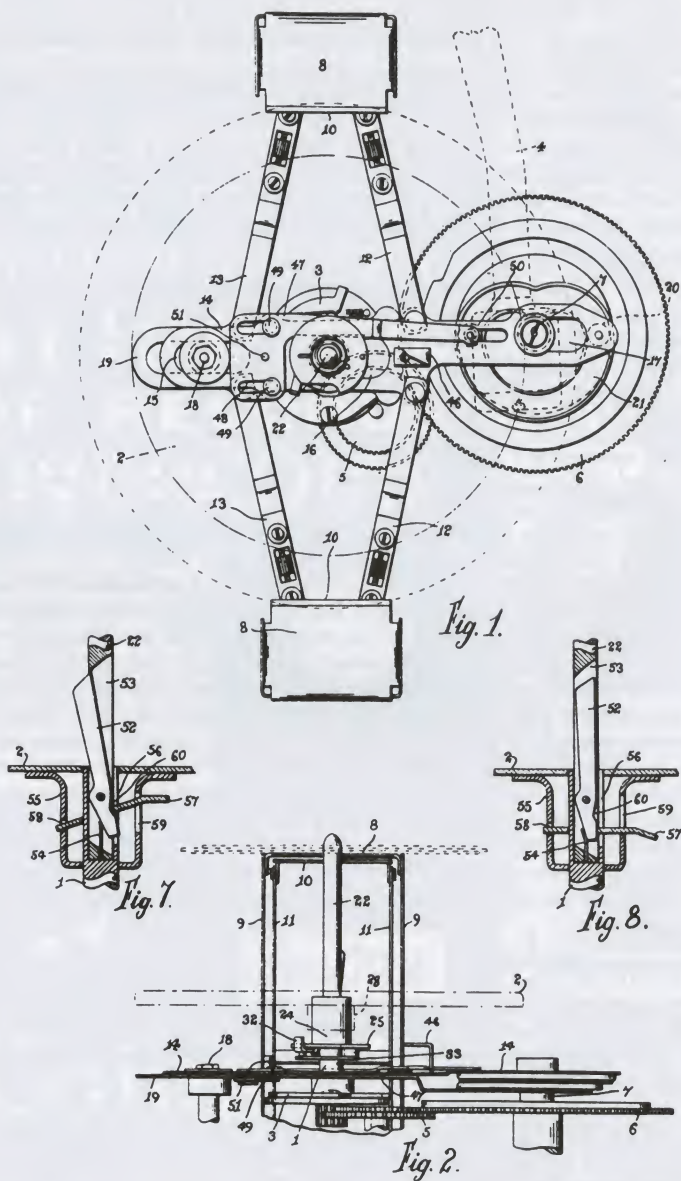
So now we had a direct reference to a special spindle modified "in known manner" to operate this feature - but who, even EMI, had produced turntables with springs poking out of the spindles? And why did they apparently buy up such a bizarre little patent from Messrs Whyte and Speed? I asked various people whether they knew of gramophone turntables with special spindles designed to grab polygonal record holes, but without any luck.

The next step was to see if EMI had any reference to inspecting (or buying) such a patent from Whyte and Speed. The Archive at Hayes yielded a direct reference only to Whyte himself - Samuel Whyte was a chemist who had been employed from 1924 on a series of 3-year research contracts, earning no less than £2000 p.a. in 1928 for working only three days a week.³ I had already found out that he had filed patents (with the Gramophone Company Ltd) for laminated records and for resorcinol-formaldehyde resin coated records (that is, along the lines of Durium discs).⁴ But Whyte's Gramophone Company contracts had clearly stated that every invention of his "shall be the sole and absolute property of the Company,"⁵ so that his polygonal hole patent, even though filed without association with the (new) name of EMI, would nevertheless presumably become the Company's property. And so, I now knew a good reason for EMI to own the odd holes; but unfortunately EMI's own patent files seemed to restrict themselves to memos regarding ideas submitted from outsiders - such as a Combined Easy Chair, Electrical Reproducer and Record Storage Device; a Radiant-Heat Electric Butter Warmer; a Clockwork Safety Razor; and a Portable Washing Machine. There was even a brief reference to having discs with rubber bands round the edges (perhaps an alternative anti-slip device); but there was still no sign of a suitable turntable spindle, apart from memos about the impossibility of supplying special spindles "to replace the original one in Mr Bamkin's invention"⁶ - so I had to return to the British Patent files.

Magazine gramophones

Under this grandiose heading are classified the inventions relating to auto-change mechanisms for playing discs. The Gramophone Company's original expensive (and potentially record-breaking) mechanism grabbed discs from a stack, played each one and then tossed it into a rubber-lined receptacle. By 1930, they had filed a patent (BP 359,106)⁷ for a rather splendid new mechanism, and in the autumn of 1931 the new HMV automatic record-changing unit was incorporated into models (117, 553, 531, 522) being shown at the Radio Exhibition at Kensington Olympia.⁸ Briefly, the records were threaded onto an extended spindle and the whole stack supported above the turntable by two small extending platforms, one on each side. Records were allowed to fall down to the turntable

[This Drawing is a reproduction of the Original on a reduced scale.]



one at a time by the retraction of part of the little platforms. Of course the pile of discs on the turntable steadily increased during playing - and so did the likelihood of slippage, especially under a heavy pick-up.

In December 1932, the new HMV Superhet Ten Autoradiogram, Model 532, priced at a handsome 80 guineas (£84), was reviewed in *The Gramophone*. The automatic record-changing unit had undergone a number of changes, one of which addressed the problem of slipping discs:

"...in order to minimise any possibility of record slip, the turntable spindle, although easily removable, engages with a key in the motor-driving spindle. This is also fitted with a spring key so that as the records are released the spring holds the key against the walls of the centre hole."⁹

This modification of the centre spindle was already the subject of a new patent (BP 406,037) filed in August 1932.¹⁰ The key in the spindle was of course arranged to retract as a record dropped down to the turntable, and was spring-loaded against the edge of the record-hole only when the disc had landed. It is important to note that, unlike in later types of auto-changer, the spindle *revolved* with the turntable.

Now that there was a spindle mechanism for gripping the edge of the record hole, an obvious development was to increase the positive action of the key in some way - from the record production side of things. And so the scene was set for non-circular holes.

How many sides?

As we have already seen from the abridgment, Whyte and Speed's provisional patent specification 421,680 of 26 October 1933 had speculated on a variety of geometric shapes for the "central aperture": symmetrical or asymmetrical, with straight or curved sides - or even ratchet-shaped holes. The complete specification kept instead to a regular straight-sided polygon in a practical manner born of experience:

"In the commercial pressing of records, the record material is pressed between upper and lower dies, and the central hole is formed by a central pin on one die co-operating with a central socket on other. It has not been found practical in using a polygonal pin for forming a polygonal hole in the records, to use also a polygonal socket, since this would entail, of course, accurate angular location of the pin or socket to register one with the other, an operation which would have to be carried out afresh every time a record matrix was changed. To avoid this, a polygonal pin is used in co-operation with a cylindrical socket, which just fits over the pin."¹¹

This arrangement obviously allows material to be forced into the gaps between the polygon and circle, with attendant pressing problems if the gaps are great enough. Whyte and Speed found that the polygonal pin should have at least eight sides to keep the gaps reasonably small. On the other hand, satisfactory engagement with a substantial enough spindle key depended on having a polygon with broad enough (and so, few enough) sides - this limited the maximum number of sides to fourteen. Whyte and Speed claimed a preference for twelve sides, and of course a polygon of a size to fit snugly over a circular turntable spindle of normal size.

By the time the complete specification was filed in August 1934, EMI at Hayes were already pressing discs with the new twelve-sided holes, designed to "grip" the spindles of their revised auto-change mechanisms. The complete specification of patent 421,680 was finally accepted on 28 December 1934.

Return to normality

After the war, the use of polygonal holes became superfluous - EMI now had more modern auto-change mechanisms (for instance, the HMV 1605 auto-radiogram, reviewed March 1948 in *Gramophone*, and the EMI autochange unit AC100, reported in June 1949); and lighter pick-ups didn't drag so much on the stack of discs. How the decision was reached to change back to circular holes is beyond the scope of this article: but in any case the return to normal is probably of rather less interest. What is more interesting is to estimate just how long this twelve-sided feature persisted at Hayes - I have seen no evidence of polygons on pressings from other countries.

The poly-hole period

It was possible to get a rough idea of how long EMI were punching 12-sided holes in their discs by examining original Hayes pressings of various British HMV, Columbia and Parlophone issues.

In this way the field was narrowed down to a period between mid-1934 and early 1950, but it was necessary to examine a more concentrated series of EMI discs to get a more precise picture of each of the change-over times. For practical reasons it was decided to examine likely records in the HMV B series, based on issue dates¹² - this contained a fairly steady stream of issues of items of a popular and ephemeral nature, and thus a high proportion of 'G' (first) stamper pressings. In the following table '12' represents a 12-sided hole, and 'O' means a circular hole; as indicated, all the pressings examined are from 'G' (first) stampers.

1934	B		
May	8152	G	O
	8154	G	O
	8155	G	O
mid-May	8156	G	O
	8160	G	O
	8175	G	O
June	8158	G	12
	8163	G	O
	8164	G	O
	8165	G	O
	8166	G	12
	8167	G	O
	8168	G	O
	8172	G	12
	8177	G	O
mid-June	8183	G	12
July	8179	G	12
mid-August	8150	G	12
September	8161	G	12

This shows a fairly clear change-over from circular holes to 12-sided in **early June 1934**, just before the complete patent specification was filed (BP 421,680, 11 August 1934). Interestingly, B8163-68 is an album set (no 208 "Practical German Talks"), in this case containing just one poly-hole disc out of the six - all 'G' stampers. Since this set is not a 'popular' item, it is likely that the odd disc comes from a later pressing from a first stamper - perhaps it was a replacement copy.

Now for the return of circular holes: here the table shows that the change back was not so clearly defined. Even the inclusion of information from "later" pressings does not show a clear-cut change; several of the discs are from mixed or later stampers ('G/R' indicates 'G' one side and 'R' other side), which helps to blur the distinctions. Anyway, there was evidently not the same urgency to make the change back to circular holes as there had been to change to polygons in 1934.

	1950	B	"early" pressing		"later" pressing	
	February	9872	G/R	12	R	O
	March	9880	G	12	G/R	O
		9881	G/R	12		
		9882	G	12	G/R	O
		9883	G	O	G/R	12
	April	9890	G/R	O	R	12
		9897	G/R	12		
		9898	G	12		
		9901	G	12		
	May	9904	G	O		
		9905	G	O		
		9906	G	O		
		9907	G	O		

Despite the relative vagueness of the data, it is reasonable to infer from this second table that the change back to circular holes occurred on records issued **between March and early May 1950** - and anyway across a longer period than that for the introduction of polygonal holes.

Twelve sides, sixteen years

The rather surprising conclusion of this investigation is that, during the lengthy period from early June 1934 to about May 1950, EMI at Hayes produced many *thousands* of pressings with 12-sided holes, with almost no publicity - and even that was rather misleading in its explanation of spindle-gripping. What is more amazing is that these non-circular holes have gone almost unnoticed even by record collectors.

Of course, it must be admitted that the polygonal holes are not normally visible, because the holes in the labels are *circular*; but in case you still regard this as an April Fool, you just look at *any* British EMI pressing from mid-1934 to early 1950: the way to see the evidence is to hold the disc up to the light and look *through* the hole, when the angled facets will show up quite nicely. And if you think EMI were a little naïve to pursue this idea, you might like to ponder the national domestic implications of an idea which they *did* turn down - an Electric Fire with Doors.

Acknowledgments

Diagrams and excerpts from the specifications of British Patents 406,037 (1934) and 421,680 (1934) are reproduced by permission of the Controller, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, in whom all Crown Copyright is vested.

Thanks are due to Ruth Edge, Chief Archivist, EMI Archives, Hayes for permission to see and use information from EMI patent files and the contract files of Samuel Whyte. Douglas

Lorimer (Monifieth) helped to pinpoint the start of the poly-holes. I am obliged to David Anderson (Stirling), who had a copy of the HMV Numerical List for 1935 and who was kind enough to look through the relevant sections of his exceptional holding of HMV B series pressings - most of the data in the tables is due to him.

Chronology

1930	Aug 18	BP 359,106 [HMV new auto record-changer] filed
1931	Sep	HMV new auto record-changing unit in various new models at Radio Show (Olympia)
1932	Aug 19	BP 406,037 [spindle key mechanism] filed
	Dec	HMV Superhet Ten Autoradiogram model 532 [using spindle key mechanism], reviewed in <i>Gramophone</i>
1933	Oct 26	BP 421,680 [polygonal holes] filed
1934	Feb 19	BP 406,037 [spindle key] complete accepted
	Jun?	Start of polygonal holes in Hayes pressings
	Aug 11	BP 421,680 [polygonal holes] complete filed
	Dec 28	BP 421,680 [polygonal holes] complete accepted
1936	Nov	Polygonal holes: announced in Columbia new records leaflet and in <i>Gramophone</i> advert
1950	Mar/May?	End of polygonal holes in Hayes pressings

References

- [1] Columbia records advertisement, *Gramophone*, November 1936.
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- [3] Contract between Samuel Whyte and Gramophone Co. Ltd., 14 May 1928.
- [4] For instance, BP 357,958 [manufacture of records by coating core or support with resorcinol-aldehyde condensation product...]: Gramophone Co. Ltd. and S Whyte, filed 19 June 1930.
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- [7] BP 359,106 [basic auto-changer mechanism]: filed 18 August 1930 by Gramophone Co. Ltd., Hayes, Middlesex, H. A. Thompson, 26 Castlebar Park, Ealing, London, and E. Chiffey, 48 Corbins Lane, South Harrow, Middlesex.
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REPORTS



London Meeting, January 19th 1995

January found us once again into yet another new year and, with his best foot forward, Geoff Edwards started the season with a lively programme entitled *Pianola Fol-de-Rolls*.

Geoff exhibited the paper part and its perforations, and played all his examples in tape transfers from LPs. We started with *Kelly Jester*, Ian Whitcomb's demonstration of just what a pianola and a sympathetic interpreter could do. These acrobatics were by far the best examples of dexterity that humans were unable to perform. All this was done by little rolls of perforated paper.

Other examples played ranged from the memorable Percy Grainger nearly getting lost in his *Country Gardens* and Joseph Lhevinne overwhelmed by the *Blue Danube* to the popular tunes of the 1920s and 1930s enhanced with that little extra finger-work, which a pianola can supply.

Needless to say, most of the audience were soon enraptured in well-known tunes, admirably reproduced and Geoff must be complimented on starting the year at Exhibition Road off on such a happy and entertaining collection of 88 notes, which I'm assured, is how many keys most of you have at home under the lids of your pianos.

George Woolford

London Meeting, February 16th 1995

The Society is indebted to Peter Copeland for his February lecture on record speeds. Taken from the academic's point of view and based on actual experiments and observations, Mr Copeland led us into the maze of considerations to be evaluated before committing our humble 78s to recorded posterity.

Peter considered the probable recording speeds used since the introduction of hand-wound 5" Berliners at 100rpm and cylinders at about the same speed. He looked at electric, treadle and water powered machines; the early Greenhill motor; clockwork gramophones and phonographs; the introduction of electric gramophone motors, electric weight-driven recording lathes and the effects caused on electrical motors before and during the standardisation of the National Power Grid.

This led directly on to recordings being marked - i.e. stroboscopes which gave 78 as a standard speed either in GB at 50 cycles per second or in America at 60 cycles per second. The BBC, during the Second World War, desperate because of power losses in the public supplies, introduced the tone band which was compared with a tone produced as a by-product of the Greenwich Mean Time pips. This tone system had been used in the days of G&T records and some HMV records gave key indications as way of getting records into pitch.

By now it had become apparent that there was no universal standard recording speed in the gramophone industry. Some record catalogues indicated speeds and some record labels showed speeds, some more optimistic than others. It was speculated that Fred Gaisberg was set the task of indicating some of the Gramophone Company's earlier attempts in their catalogues thus giving rise to the markings above or below 78rpm. Peter suggested that Fred

Gaisberg assumed that the divisions on the acoustic gramophone speed control represented 1 rpm and since no stroboscopes existed at that time, counting was the only accurate method of setting the 'official' speed of 78rpm.

HMV finally 'blotted their copy book' by issuing the VA and VB white label series of archive re-issued recording all marked at 78rpm. It was known that Victor recorded John McCormack in 1927 at 75rpm and then recommended that the records be played at 78rpm (to improve his vocal tone?).

Peter then moved on to talk about concert pitch and the problems where brass instruments and organs were unable to be re-tuned. Recording studios had the waxes heated to 90 degrees Fahrenheit to keep them soft - most instruments rise in pitch with heat whilst the piano falls.

Another sound storage medium considered more stable than 78s was film. Edison standardised on 35mm film but because of the different electrical supplies around the world it ran at a variable number of exposures per second. Its modern successor video has similar problems where there is the American NTSC system and the European PAL system. Variations of these systems have fluctuations in picture and sound reproduction.

Lastly Peter considered the problem of falling pitch caused by 'drag' during recording (a problem not encountered with cylinders or Pathé discs). Several recordings of large-scale works covering several discs often need re-pitching near the centre of the discs to match the pitch at the beginning of the next side. All this is dependent on the listener knowing what he or she expects. Many artists transposed both up and down in order to perform within their range. Everybody must therefore use their ears and experience to adjust the speed of their turntables accordingly. Lateral recordings can rotate at any speed from 60rpm to

95rpm, Pathé's can rotate from 80rpm to 120rpm and cylinders can rotate from 100rpm to 160rpm.

The audience was appreciative of Peter's suggestions and findings and great interest was shown by individual members in various aspects of the above. Some questions were answered; others opened larger and less defined problems than were originally envisaged.

The Society is greatly indebted to Peter Copeland for sharing his researches with those present and for the lucid and informed manner in which he stated his case.

George Woolford

Midlands Group AGM, January 21st 1995

This event took place in the Carr's Lane Methodist Centre, Birmingham. In his review of the past year's activities Eddie Dunn, the Group Chairman, said the year had been successful with good attendances and accommodation problems at our bi-monthly meetings had been resolved. The profits from the Walsall and Wolverhampton fairs had helped to boost our funds.

The formula of having two smaller set programmes at our meetings had proved to be popular as more variety was provided for the audience and were less onerous for the presenters.

The officers and committee were elected 'en bloc'. Our next meeting will be on Saturday 18th March when Eddie Dunn, assisted by Gerry Lee and Peter Dempsey will present *A Night at the Opera*.

This evening's entertainment was provided by members bringing along some of their favourite items from their collections. This provided a wide variety of repertoire and included:

1) A transcription of a piano piece (found in fragmented form) by the English March King Kenneth Alford (real name Major F. Ricketts, of The Royal Marines). The recording made last year, was the first of this piece.

2) Two American V Discs of Count Basie and His Orchestra and Paul Whiteman and His Orchestra with Billie Holliday (vocal).

3) An advertising item from 1912: Mr F. Elliott singing the very apt *Come Round and Hear the Gramophone*.

4) The surprise of the evening: Gerry Lee, a well-known lover of John McCormack and other serious vocal artists, stunned us by playing Elvis Presley in *Are You Lonesome Tonight* and *Jailhouse Rock*.

There were also many items of comedy, jazz, dance music and opera. These all gave much enjoyment. Many of these items were played on the Society's E.M.G. Expert Minor. It was a revelation to hear these records on such a fine machine.

Our thanks go to all who participated.

Geoff Howl



The tone arm and sound-box of Mark Gray's Orchorsol gramophone
See Mark's letter on page 264

REVIEWS



The Scottish Songbook 20 Treasured Scottish Songs by Timeless Voices of Yesteryear, MIDCD 001

This CD is the first of a new series called *The Balladeer Series* issued by the Moidart Music Group Ltd. There is a veritable treasure of old performances on this CD. I have many of the original 78s, most of which I had not played for some time. I enjoyed listening to these artists again. They include John McCormack singing *The Auld Scotch Songs*, Annie Laurie and *Turn Ye to Me*, Alma Gluck, Isobel Baillie singing *Ca' the Yowes to the Knowes*, Harry Lauder singing *Road to the Isles*, Nellie Melba singing *Ye Banks and Braes o' Bonnie Doon*, Dora Lambette, Joseph Hislop singing *My Love is Like a Red, Red Rose*, Bonnie Mary of Argyle, *The Bonnie Banks and Braes of Loch Lomond* and *Afton Water*, Louise Kirkby-Lunn, Jeanne Brola, Peter Dawson, Paul Robeson, Clara Butt, Carmen Hill, Esther Coleman, Foster Richardson and Sydney MacEwan. All of these artists sing memorable renditions of their chosen songs and the collector should be thankful to Peter Dempsey who compiled and produced this album. After listening to this selection I decided to retrieve some original recordings from my shelves and compare them with the transfers on this CD. I was in for a shock. Much to my surprise I found that the un-named transfer engineer had used so much filtering in an attempt to remove the surface noise of the originals (many of them suffering from Hayes crackle) that the timbre of the voices of many of the singers had been altered and that many of the accompaniments, which are an essential element of any performance, had been reduced to secondary status. It was a surprise to find that transfers of old 78s done in the middle 1990s sounded like those done 30 years previously in the middle 1960s. It is a pity that

the transfers are of such a poor quality as the idea of such a compilation is first class and should introduce a new generation of listeners to quality artists of the past. As a result I can only give this CD a qualified recommendation.

Sydney MacEwan The Songs of Scotland, MIDCD 002

Sydney MacEwan was one of the best singers that Scotland has produced. He had a beautiful light tenor voice ideally suited to the Scottish Ballad. He trained under Harry Plunkett Greene at the Royal Academy of Music in London. He had a successful professional career but he gave it all up in 1938 to study for the priesthood. He was ordained in 1944. Against all odds he managed to persuade the Church authorities to allow him to continue to make records and he recorded LPs for companies such as Nixa and Philips. However this CD consists of 78s made between the years 1934 and 1941. Titles included are: *The Road to the Isles*, *The Peat-Fire Flame*, *Maighdean na h'airidh*, *Island Moon*, *The Lewis Bridal Song*, *The Bonnie Banks of Loch Lomond*, *Ye Banks and Braes*, *Tog Orm Mo Phiob*, *When the Kye Come Hame*, *The Rowan Tree*, *An Eriskay Love Lilt*, *Herdin Song*, *Mhnathan A'Ghlinne So*, *Ho Ro My Nut Brown Maiden*, *Bonny Mary of Argyle*, *Afton Water*, *Bonnie Wee Thing*, *The Lea Rig*, *Bonnie Strathyre* and *My Ain Wee Hoose*. There are some marvellous performances here, but again they have been marred by poor transfers. Once more so much filtering has been used that the unique timbre of Sydney MacEwan's voice is lost. He had a light tenor voice and somehow the voice is made to sound almost baritone in many of these transfers in spite of the transfers being carried out at the correct speed. These effects are particularly evident in the recordings of *Maighdean na h'airidh* and *Mhnathan A'Ghlinne So*. These are Gaelic folk songs with a clairsach accompaniment by Hilda Mary Campbell. The clairsach is a Gaelic harp. It is considerably smaller than the type of harp used in an orchestra. Consequently it does not have deep bass strings. Yet in these two transfers the clairsach is made to sound like an orchestral harp. The delicacy of the clairsach's unique

treble register is totally lost. When I played my copies of the original 78s these qualities were immediately restored. Sydney MacEwan sounded like the light tenor he really was and the clairsach accompaniment shone out in all its beauty. Once again I can only give this CD a qualified recommendation.

Both these CDs are mid-priced (around **£8.99**) and are available from record shops. They are also available direct from **Moldart Music Group Ltd.**, PO Box 81, Faversham, Kent ME13 0DH, U.K.

The Glasgow Orpheus Choir 20 Classic Recordings, MOICD 007

This is a full priced CD from the same source as the above CDs. These are transfers of late 78s made by the Glasgow Orpheus Choir. They were originally recorded on tape and consequently these transfers which are mostly from the original tapes have little evidence of background noise. The contents of this CD are mainly the recordings which were issued on the HMV 10" LPs DLP 1019 and 1020. As in the original LPs Sir Hugh Robertson gives his commentary on many of the recordings. I have

never heard the Glasgow Orpheus Choir sound so well. The digital transfers are superb. Moldart Music Group were able to license the original tapes from EMI and transfer them to CD. Unlike the two *Balladeer Series* CDs reviewed above there is little evidence of filtering, consequently the clarity of the original recordings has been preserved. The transfers were done in this case by David Glover and SRT Studios. All my favourites are here: *All in the April Evening, Belmont, Crimond, Bonnie Dundee, An Eriskay Love Lilt, Ca' the Yowes, Hark! Hark! the Echo Falling, The Blue Bird and Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring*. All in all there are 20 tracks, none of them bad. This is a thoroughly enjoyable CD and is a splendid tribute to a unique choir. The Glasgow Orpheus Choir set a choral standard under their conductor Sir Hugh Robertson that no subsequent choir has been able to match. I can thoroughly recommend this CD and urge all lovers of choral music to purchase it. It is available from all good record shops for about **£12.99** or direct from **Moldart Music Group Ltd.**, PO Box 81, Faversham, Kent ME13 0DH, U.K.

Chris Hamilton

RESEARCH APPEAL

A PhD student requires information about the life, career, performances and recordings of the pioneer woman professional trumpet player **Edna White (Chandler)** - whom many members will recall made Edison Diamond Discs, both ensemble and solo - for a dissertation she is writing at the College of Music, University of Wisconsin at Madison. All postage, telephone, copying costs etc. will be covered.

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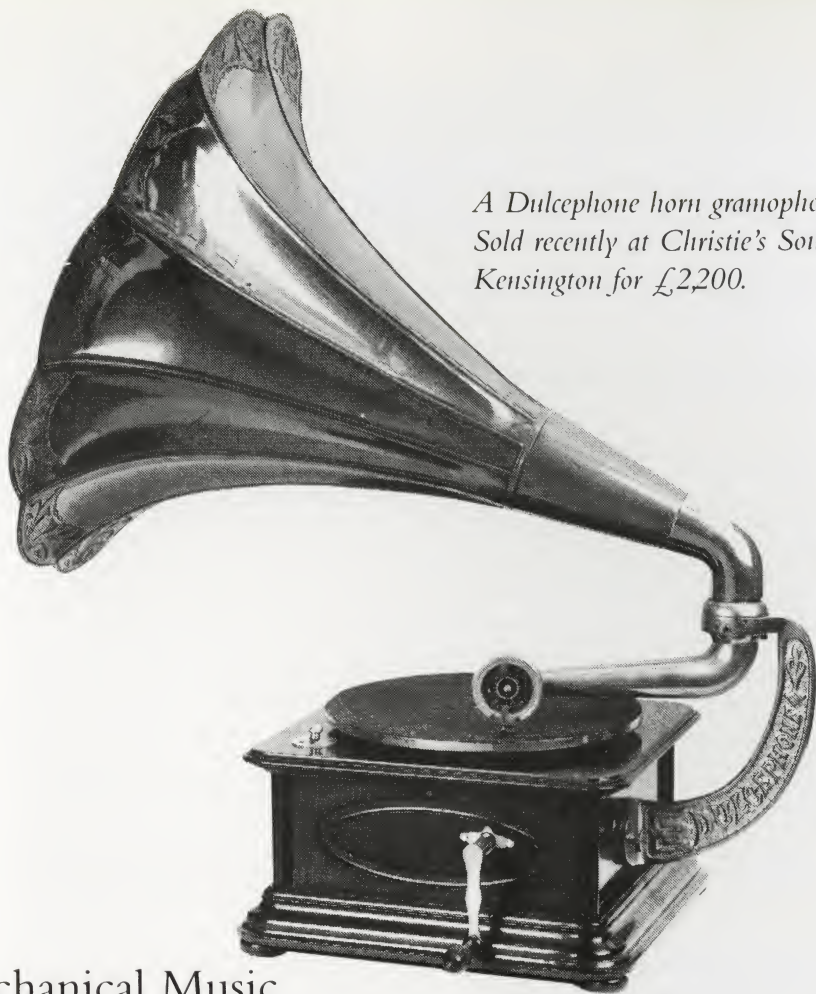
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